

TMDL Implementation Tracking: *Current Status and Future Needs for States in EPA Regions 5, 6, and 10*

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program recently performed an analysis of the current watershed restoration performance measures and potential hurdles to identifying future restoration goals and priorities. The results of the Region 5 analysis revealed the magnitude of the importance of documenting and tracking implementation efforts for TMDLs and the benefits that would ensue from such efforts. For example, tracking implementation efforts would allow for TMDL Program results to be more accurately reported and predicted.

The Cadmus Group, Inc. (Cadmus), in conjunction with Camp Dresser, & McKee, Inc. (CDM), and Geosyntec Consultants, recently assessed the current status and future needs of TMDL implementation tracking in nine different states, including each of the Region 5 states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin), two states in Region 10 (Alaska and Washington), and one state in Region 6 (New Mexico). The level of tracking performed by the nine states interviewed varies from almost no tracking of implementation information to relatively robust dedicated tracking systems with query and reporting functions and GIS capabilities. Most of the states do not have a dedicated TMDL implementation tracking system in place; however, almost all of the states interviewed see value in developing and implementing a tracking system, with potential benefits ranging from establishing a process and indicators for tracking interim implementation steps to reporting progress on restoration to multiple internal and external stakeholders. The resources necessary to develop and maintain a TMDL implementation tracking system is a major concern for most states.

In addition to assessing the status and needs of TMDL implementation tracking, a number of recommendations were made following the interviews with state and EPA staff. For example, the recommended key first steps to developing a state or regional TMDL implementation tracking system are to: 1) Identify key questions that would be answered using the information collected on TMDL implementation; and 2) Develop the set of indicators necessary to answer those questions. A pilot tracking project with two to three states would provide excellent insight into the challenges and success factors for a regional or national system.

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